

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SHUM, SOCI, GW, SF
SUBJ: EUGEN LODERER, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL METALWORKERS
FEDERATION AND GERMAN METALWORKERS UNION, VISITS SOUTH AFRICA

1. SUMMARY: EUGEN LODERER, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL
METALWORKERS FEDERATION AND THE GERMAN METALWORKERS UNION,
VISITED SOUTH AFRICA IN EARLY JANUARY TO LOOK INTO THE
POSITION OF BLACK WORKERS. WHILE WORK CONDITIONS STRUCK
HIM AS ROUGHLY ON A PAR WITH THOSE OF WHITE WORKERS, WAGES,
TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE RIGHT
OFFICIALLY TO ORGANIZE EITHER LAG OR DO NOT EXIST. EVEN SO,
LODERER COUNSELS CONTINUING PRESSURE ON SOUTH AFRICA TO
ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, SHORT HOWEVER OF BOYCOTT OR
ECONOMIC SANCTIONS WHICH HE BELIEVES WOULD BE FRUITLESS
AND FALL MOST HEAVILY ON BLACK WORKERS. HE HAS
DRAWN SOME LOCAL CRITICISM FOR NOT SUPPORTING ICFTU
DEMANDS FOR STRONGER ACTION AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA.
END SUMMARY

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2. EUGEN LODERER, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL METAL-
WORKERS FEDERATION (IMF) AND THE GERMAN METALWORKERS
UNION, VISITED SOUTH AFRICA JAN 1-16 TO LOOK INTO
THE POSITION OF BLACK METALWORKERS. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED
BY IMF SECRETARY GENERAL HERMAN REBHAN AND HIGH GERMAN
METALWORKER UNION OFFICIALS. THE TRIP HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY

SUGGESTED BY VOLKSWAGEN (GERMANY), WHICH HAD BEEN PRESSING ITS SOUTH AFRICAN SUBSIDIARY TO GIVE GREATER RIGHTS TO BLACK WORKERS, BUT TOOK ON A LARGER FOCUS AS PLANS FOR IT DEVELOPED AS THE IMF HAS A COORDINATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR 13 SOUTH AFRICAN UNIONS (FOUR WHITE, THREE COLORED AND SIX BLACK) IN THE METALWORKING FIELD. THIS REPORT IS BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH LODERER AND MEMBERS OF HIS ENTOURAGE, AS WELL AS PRESS SOURCES.

3. WHILE IN SOUTH AFRICA, LODERER SAW REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL SOUTH AFRICAN METALWORKERS UNIONS. HE VISITED THE LEADING GERMAN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS (MNC'S) IN SOUTH AFRICA, FOR EXAMPLE, VOLKSWAGEN, SIEMENS, MERCEDES-BENZ, AND MANNESMANN, AS WELL AS SOME FOREIGN MNC'S, INCLUDING FORD AND GENERAL MOTORS. HE ALSO MET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WHITE AND BLACK POLITICAL OPPOSITION.

4. LODERER AND HIS PARTY CAME AWAY FROM SOUTH AFRICA CONVINCED THAT A BOYCOTT OF SOUTH AFRICA, AS PROPOSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS AND OTHERS, WOULD ONLY STIFFEN THE BACKBONE OF THE SUPPORTERS OF APARTHEID AND DEAL A SETBACK TO THOSE WHITE AND BLACK LEADERS IN SOUTH AFRICA WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE THE POSITION OF BLACKS. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC MEASURES WOULD FALL MOST HEAVILY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON BLACKS. MOREOVER, LODERER WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY THE EFFORTS OF SOME GERMAN AND U.S. MNC'S TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF BLACK WORKERS AND OF BLACK UNIONS. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND UPON HIS RETURN, LODERER HAS URGED CRITICS OF SOUTH AFRICA TO RECOGNIZE THE INTERNAL FACTORS INHIBITING MORE RAPID PROGRESS TOWARD THE ELIMINATION OF APARTHEID WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, CONTINUING AND PERHAPS INTENSIFYING THE MORAL PRESSURE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME AND SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYERS TO IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR BLACKS.

5. VISITS TO A NUMBER OF PLANTS PERSUADED LODERER THAT THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF BLACK AND COLORED WORKERS ARE VIRTUALLY ON A PAR WITH THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF WHITES. PAY AND FRINGE BENEFITS, HOWEVER, LAG CONSIDERABLY. LACK OF ADEQUATE SCHOOLING AND APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES HAS THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF LOCKING BLACKS INTO THE LOWER-PAID JOBS.

6. AS BLACK UNIONS ARE NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT, THEIR SUCCESS IN WINNING BENEFITS

FOR THEIR WORKERS DEPENDS ON RECOGNITION AND THE
GENEROSITY OF MANAGEMENT AT EACH PLANT, AND THERE IS NO
RECOURSE IF MANAGEMENT RENEGES ON BENEFITS PROMISED
BLACK WORKERS. DURING HIS VISIT TO VARIOUS MNC'S,
LODERER URGED THEM TO RECOGNIZE BLACK UNIONS AND TO
ACCORD THEIR MEMBERS THE SAME BENEFITS AS WHITE UNION

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MEMBERS. SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WAS, IN FACT, AGREED UPON
BY VOLKSWAGEN (SA) IN LATE 1977, WHILE MANAGEMENT AT
SIEMENS (SA) AGREED TO FOLLOW SUIT DURING HIS TRIP.
MERCEDES-BENZ FLATLY REFUSED TO GO ALONG AND THE
OTHER GERMAN MNCS STILL HAVE THE MATTER UNDER CONSIDERA-
TION. HE BELIEVES, NEVERTHELESS, THAT THERE IS A GROWING
WILLINGNESS IN MNCS TO TREAT ALL WORKERS EQUALLY,
AN ATTITUDE HE BELEIVES IS DICTATED AS MUCH BY THE
INCREASING DEMANDS OF SOUTH AFRICAN INDUSTRY FOR
SKILLED LABOR AS BY MORAL CONSIDERATIONS.

6. LODERER WAS FRANKLY DISTRESSED BY THE OPPOSITION
OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN UNION MEMBERS TO GREATER RIGHTS
AND BENEFITS FOR BLACK WORKERS. HE REJECTED THEIR
ARGUMENT THAT THE "HOME LANDS" POLICY ADEQUATELY
PROVIDES FOR THE NEEDS OF BLACKS AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO

DRAW A PARALLEL BETWEEN BLACK WORKERS FROM THE "HOME
LANDS" WHO HOLD JOBS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND FOREIGN
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WORKERS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN WHO WORK IN GERMANY AND
OTHER NORTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THAT THE WHITE
WORKERS CONSIDER THEMSELVES THREATENED BY THE BLACK
WORKERS, IN HIS VIEW, WILL REMAIN A MAJOR BARRIER TO
PROGRESS IN ELIMINATING APARTHEID. HE WAS ALSO
TROUBLED THAT THE COLORED WORKERS (INDIANS) FEAR THAT,
SOONER OR LATER, THEY WILL BE CONFRONTED WITH THE SAME
HARD CHOICES THAT THE INDIANS HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED
IN UGANDA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN EAST AFRICA.

7. COMMENT: LODERER'S MODERATE COMMENTS ON SOUTH AFRICA
HAVE DRAWN CRITICISM FROM POLITICAL LEFTISTS AND
ICFTU SOURCES SINCE HIS RETURN. HE HAS DEFENDED HIMSELF
BY REFERRING TO THE HEALING QUALITIES OF TIME AND
EVOLUTION ("... JUST AS WE IN GERMANY NEEDED TIME TO
OVERCOME THE GREAT DIFFICULTIES OF FASCISM"), AND
HIS STRONG BELIEF THAT ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON SOUTH
AFRICAN WOULD PRIMARILY HURT BLACKS. END COMMENT. BLAKE

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